

Documents for *Watchman* DBQ

Article #1: Background (excerpt)

***To Kill a Mockingbird* readers are excited for new book**

Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a classic read in schools and book clubs around the world. It was also her only novel, until now.

The characters from that book will return in a new novel by Lee that will be released this summer.

The new novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, was written by Lee in the 1950s. It featured Atticus Finch and his daughter. She then wrote *To Kill a Mockingbird* using the same characters. *Mockingbird* was published, became a hit and won awards. But *Watchman* was lost along the way.

How It Came To Be

The publisher is planning to print 2 million copies to start. This 304-page book comes more than 50 years after Lee's first.

In a statement released by Lee's publisher, she explains how this novel came to be.

"In the mid-1950s, I completed a novel called *Go Set a Watchman*," said Lee, 88. "It features the character known as Scout as an adult woman, and I thought it a pretty decent effort.

"My editor, who was taken by the flashbacks to Scout's childhood, persuaded me to write a novel (what became *To Kill a Mockingbird*) from the point of view of the young Scout.

"I was a first-time writer, so I did as I was told. I hadn't realized it (the original book) had survived, so was surprised and delighted when my dear friend and lawyer Tonja Carter discovered it.

"After much thought and hesitation, I shared it with a handful of people I trust and was pleased to hear that they considered it worthy of publication. I am humbled and amazed that this will now be published after all these years."

Characters Have Grown Up

The new book is set in Maycomb, Alabama, the fictional town introduced in *Mockingbird*. While *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set in the 1930s, *Watchman* is set in the mid-1950s, roughly the same time that Lee was writing the story.

While Lee was writing *Watchman*, the civil rights movement was beginning to gain force. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools — schools separated by race — were unconstitutional. Rosa Parks was arrested in 1955, leading to the yearlong Montgomery bus boycott in which people avoided riding the bus in protest.

To Kill a Mockingbird follows 6-year-old Scout Finch, her brother Jem, and their father Atticus Finch. The father is a local lawyer who defends a black man falsely accused of serious crimes.

The new book revisits the same characters about 20 years later.

"Scout (Jean Louise Finch) has returned to Maycomb from New York to visit her father, Atticus," the publisher's announcement reads. "She is forced to grapple with issues both personal and political as she tries to understand her father's attitude toward society, and her own feelings about the place where she was born and spent her childhood."

From Newsela: <https://newsela.com/articles/mockingbird-sequel/id/7248/>

Article #2: *Wall Street Journal* Review (excerpt)

In Harper Lee's 'Go Set a Watchman' Atticus Finch Defends Jim Crow

There's no big, dramatic event like the Tom Robinson trial to motor "Go Set a Watchman." But the blight of racial strife is still the heart of the story. Jean Louise's visit takes place shortly after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision—"the Supreme Court's bid for immortality," as Atticus sarcastically calls it—and, like most of the South, the town is in upheaval over the prospect of enforced integration. Jean Louise thinks little of it until she sees Henry and her father attending a meeting of the Maycomb County Citizens' Council, where local whites convene to spew racist bile and organize resistance to the federal government.

Jean Louise is appalled by the possibility that the men she most admires could belong to such a group, but when she confronts Atticus, he defends the council as a necessary reaction to the overreach of the government and the meddling of the NAACP. Blacks have "made terrific progress in adapting themselves to white ways," he grants, but they're not at all ready for full civil rights: "Do you want your children going to a school that's been dragged down to accommodate Negro children?"

Yes, that is correct: Atticus Finch, standard-bearer of justice and integrity and one of the few unambiguously heroic figures in American literature, was originally conceived as a segregationist. Jean Louise can't believe it either, and as her furious arguments with both Henry and Atticus unfurl—"You deny that they're human," she shouts at her father—the focus of the novel shifts from the issue of civil rights to the story of a young woman's painfully evolving relationships with the men in her life. Her discoveries make a future with

Henry seem impossible. More, they reduce Atticus from a god to “the status of a human being,” and she must find the courage to love him anyway, hypocrisies and all.

Readers will find themselves facing the same trouble. On one hand, this abrupt redefinition of a famed fictional character is fascinating. Atticus’s ideas about gradualism and states’ rights were commonplace in the mid-century South....His provincial convictions and bigotries actually make him a truer, more representative figure than the bespectacled icon of “To Kill a Mockingbird.”

Yet for the millions who hold that novel dear, “Go Set a Watchman” will be a test of their tolerance and capacity for forgiveness. At the peak of her outrage, Jean Louise tells her father, “You’ve cheated me in a way that’s inexpressible.” I don’t doubt that many who read this novel are going to feel the same way.

From Wall Street Journal:

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/dark-days-in-maycomb-to-kill-a-mockingbird-1436564966>

Article #3: New York Times -- Letters from readers about Watchman

To the Editor:

After reading Michiko Kakutani's review of Harper Lee's novel "Go Set a Watchman," I couldn't help but feel a sense of worry and sadness about the Atticus Finch the book holds in its pages.

As a native of Alabama, I had held up Atticus in my own mind as a redemptive figure, a symbol of hope, a hero who was brave enough to fight for what is right despite the poisonous and dangerous pools of racism long associated with whites in the Deep South. He was a symbol of the good that I desperately wanted to believe was around me as a child growing up in the late 1960s and '70s near Birmingham. But the reality was often more complicated.

When "To Kill a Mockingbird" was published in 1960, the South, and the United States, needed the heroic story of Atticus Finch. But over the past 50 years, we've witnessed struggle, strife and, most of all, unprecedented triumph.

Now, in 2015, although my Atticus bubble may be burst, I'll simply have to handle it. I can't wait to read "Watchman."

CODY LYON
Brooklyn

To the Editor:

For many years, Harper Lee resisted pleas to write another novel after the overwhelming success of "To Kill a Mockingbird." I now believe that what she resisted was not another novel but the publication of a novel that she had written before "Mockingbird." And who could blame her?

"Mockingbird" established — much to Ms. Lee's surprise — Atticus Finch as the epitome of brave decency in trying times. He became an idol to lawyers and nonlawyers alike, inspiring many to enter the legal profession. He is the hero of a book that is required reading for most high school students.

Why would she want the depiction of Atticus in “Go Set a Watchman” as a 72-year-old racist and hypocrite to destroy the idol she had sculpted?

Ms. Lee now resides in a nursing home, and her mental acuity is the subject of much debate. What is not debatable is that “Watchman” will sell many books, and some will profit handsomely.

I will not read “Watchman.” It should have never been published, and I don’t think Ms. Lee intended it to be. Atticus Finch resides in my memory as a hero, and no mere words will change that.

LEONARD MALKIN

Troy, Mich.

To the Editor:

Readers shouldn’t struggle to reconcile the inconsistencies between the Atticus Finch character in the two novels in light of their publishing history.

“Go Set a Watchman” and “To Kill a Mockingbird” were never written with the intention that they be viewed as part of an ongoing saga. They are two different versions of the story that Harper Lee wanted to tell.

Readers should treat “Go Set a Watchman” as a historical artifact in the creative process of one of the great novels in American literature.

FRED CANTOR

Westport, Conn.

From the *New York Times*:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/14/opinion/go-set-a-watchman-by-harper-lee-atticus-finch-transformed.html>